

## **THE SPC COASTAL & OCEANIC FISHERIES PROGRAMMES DIGITAL LIBRARY**

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**Abstract:** The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC) has been involved in marine resource management since its creation, 60 years ago. Since then, thousands of papers and reports have been produced by, for, or in collaboration with SPC, and have been archived over the years by SPC's library.

These documents are invaluable for retracing past records of marine resource exploitation in the Pacific Islands region, providing information that is no longer available anywhere else; for example, commodity export figures for the 1920s and 1930s. While digging through 60-year-old reports can be a thrilling experience, it requires considerable time and physical access to documents. In practice, old reports and meeting papers are rarely accessed and are not easily searchable.

Recent documents have been made available electronically on SPC's website, but they are scattered in different places and not searchable through a common interface. Moreover, not all fisheries officers in the Pacific have access to the Internet; and those that do sometimes have difficulty downloading documents because of limited bandwidth.

The challenge of this project was to resurrect historical documents and make them, as well as more recent papers, available to the largest audience possible — whether they have access to the Internet or not — and provide search and retrieval tools for thousands of documents collated into a digital library.

A strong collaboration between SPC's library, the Fisheries Information Section and the Reef Fisheries Observatory (with funding from the European Union through the Pacific Regional Oceanic and Coastal Fisheries Project) made it possible to create both a DVD (with

annual releases) and an online version of the fisheries library that can be accessed from the Internet <http://www.spc.int/mrd/fishlib.php>

**Keywords:** Libraries - Special collection - Electronic information resources. Digital libraries Marine resources - Electronic resources - Oceania

The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC, formerly the South Pacific Commission) is an international organization that provides technical assistance, policy advice, training and research services to 22 Pacific Island countries and territories. The SPC has been involved in marine resource management since the early 1950's soon after the SPC was established. Currently, the Marine Resources Division, made up of the Oceanic Fisheries Programme, the Coastal Fisheries Programme and the Regional Maritime Programme, is responsible for providing marine management information, advice and technical assistance to SPC members. The Fisheries Information Section, within the Coastal Fisheries Programme, is dedicated to providing practical resource materials and ensuring that SPC fisheries publications are distributed to the appropriate stakeholders.

In 2005 the Nauru Fisheries and marine Resources Authority indicated that it was having trouble accessing SPC fisheries information. Internet access is oftentimes limited in the Pacific Islands region and opening large PDFs can be impossible. The short term solution was to provide a snapshot of the SPC website on a DVD which could be browsed on local computers without the need to access the internet. However, it became clear that there were many SPC fisheries documents not available on the website and those that were available were scattered and could not be searched from a common interface. The purpose of the SPC Coastal & Oceanic Fisheries Programmes Digital Library project was to address these two problems.

Since the establishment of the SPC in 1947 thousands of fisheries papers, technical reports, meeting reports, handbooks, posters, etc., have been produced by, for, or in collaboration with SPC. These documents are invaluable for retracing past records of marine resource exploitation in the Pacific Islands region and providing information that is no longer available elsewhere. The vast majority of SPC's fisheries publications are held in the SPC Special Collection in the main library at SPC headquarters in Noumea, New Caledonia. This collection spans the history of the organisation, and, as SPC is a bilingual organisation, most of these publications are held in both English and French, with a few in Pacific Island languages.

The Coastal Fisheries Programme and the SPC library agreed to collaborate to make these publications available electronically. The library's first step in this project was to identify and find any missing fisheries publications. All those documents that did not exist in electronic format were then scanned by library staff and saved as PDFs. These were subsequently put through the process of optical character recognition (OCR) to make them full text searchable.

The next step was to determine the most efficient way in which to link the PDF with the bibliographic metadata. Since 2005 the SPC library has used Koha, an open source integrated library system software, to manage its collection. Most of the SPC fisheries publications were already in the catalogue, but the quality of cataloguing was not consistent and some of the more ephemeral material, such as meeting working papers, was not in the catalogue at all. It was decided that the SPC library staff would add or verify the bibliographic records of the fisheries publications and documents to a consistent standard, after which the metadata would be exported.

The SPC Reef Information Manager, Franck Magron, created a program called “Doc Repository” which would capture the metadata existing in Koha and import it into Greenstone, the digital library management software chosen for this project. The metadata and the PDFs would then be linked in Greenstone by Mr. Magron.

All of these electronic documents were then made available online using a Lucerne search interface (<http://www.spc.int/mrd/fishlib.php>). It was decided that a DVD would also be produced and distributed throughout the region for those with weak or nonexistent access to the internet.

The strength of this project was the strong collaboration between several different sections of the SPC and the results provide an example which will hopefully be followed by other SPC programmes, as well as other Pacific Regional organisations.